

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO ALL EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TREASURY

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

USDEL JEC PARIS

INFO USSAGE NKP

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

COGARD

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST BY POUCH

XMT AMEMBASSY SUVA

UNCLAS STATE 028909

COGARD FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, XC, US

SUBJECT: FEBRUARY 7 EA PRESS SUMMARY

1. INDOCHINA

COX NEWSPAPERS REPORT THAT PRES MAY INVITE THIEU TO WASHINGTON SOON TO HELP PERSUADE CONGRESS THAT MORE MIL AID NEEDED; QUOTE WH SOURCES THAT TENTATIVE DATE OF LAST OF APR SET FOR VISIT. ADD THAT OTHER WH AND DOS OFFICIALS BELIEVE VISIT "HIGHLY UNLIKELY AS WELL AS UNDESIRABLE" (UPI WASHINGTON). LATE IN DAY WH SAID UNCLASSIFIED

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HAD NO PLAN TO INVITE THIEU TO WASHINGTON (GLOBE).

US AIRMEN HELP VNAF REORGANIZE SUPPLY SYSTEM THAT HAS DETERIORATED IN PAST TWO YRS. USG RULES FORBID MIL

VISITORS FROM STAYING IN VN MORE THAN FOUR DAYS, SO EVERY FOURTH DAY TRANSPORT FLIES MEN TO PI, THEN BRINGS THEM BACK NEXT MORNING. US SOURCES IN SAIGON DENIED THAT AIRMEN'S PRESENCE VIOLATES C-F (UPI GLOBE 2/6, CHITRIB). PENTAGON SOURCES SAID DID NOT BELIEVE ACTION WAS C-F VIOLATION. ADDED THAT OPERATION JUST GOT UNDERWAY, AND IS NOT "ROUTINE" UNDERTAKING. COMMENTED THAT DISCLOSURE IS "SOMEWHAT EMBARRASSING" BECAUSE DOD IS ASKING FOR SUPPLEMENTAL MIL AID FOR SVN (UPI, WP). US EMBASSY IN SAIGON DISCLOSED THAT WAS SPEEDING UP SHIPMENT OF SPARE PARTS FOR VNAF, AND BRINGING IN SMALL GROUPS

OF USAF SUPPLY SPECIALISTS FROM BASES IN PHILS, SK AND THAILAND ON TDY TO UNPACK AND STORE PARTS (AP, SUN).

FOUR INDEPENDENT AND ANTI-GVN PAPERS SUSPENDED PUBLICATION IN SAIGON THURS TO PROTEST GOVT CLOSING OF FIVE OPPOSITION DAILIES AND ARREST OF REPORTERS ACCUSED OF BEING COMMUNISTS (CSM). NYT'S MARKHAM IN SAIGON DESCRIBES LONG GVN NEWS CONFERENCE IN WHICH "EVIDENCE" PRESENTED THAT COMMUNIST RING THAT INFILTRATED PRESS WAS CRACKED. CONFERENCE FEATURED TWO WHO SAID THEY WERE FORMER COMMUNIST AGENTS. REPORTERS NOT PERMITTED TO QUESTION THEM. QUOTES INFO MINISTER THAT THERE WAS NO CONNECTION BETWEEN RECENT POLITICAL ATTACK ON THIEU AND CLOSURE OF PAPERS, AND POLICE COMMANDER THAT 18 "CONFIRMED COMMUNIST AGENTS" WERE ARRESTED WHEN RING CRACKED. POINTS OUT THAT LIST INCLUDED SOME WELL-KNOWN FIGURES ON SAIGON INTELLECTUAL SCENE, AND AT LEAST TWO HAVE BEEN JAILED BEFORE. REPORTS SEVERAL VIET AND FOREIGN INFORMANTS INSIST PRIVATELY THERE ARE COMMUNIST AGENTS AMONG THOSE ARRESTED.

WP'S MCCOMBS IN SAIGON DESCRIBES PRESS CONFERENCE, IN WHICH GVN BACKED UP CHARGES THAT COMMUNISTS HAD SUBVERTED LARGE SECTIONS OF PRESS, AS "RANCOROUS AT TIMES." QUOTES ACTING INFO MINISTER THAT MANAGERS OF FIVE CLOSED PAPERS COVERED UP "UNDERGROUND COMMUNIST UNCLASSIFIED

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CADRES" IN THEIR OFFICES.

MCCOMBS NOTES THAT NO EXPLANATION GIVEN AS TO WHY ARRESTS CAME NOW, WHEN APPEARS THAT PUBLICITY CAN ONLY DAMAGE THIEU'S EFFORT TO GET MORE MIL AID FROM CONGRESS. SAYS POLITICAL ANALYSTS SEE MOVE AS EFFORT TO CRUSH ELEMENTS OF INTERNAL OPPOSITION DESPITE OFFICIAL DENIALS. WESTERN ANALYST UELIEVES POSSIBLE THAT THIEU MADE "BAD MISTAKE."

THIEU TOURED FRONT LINES, EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT US WILL GIVE MORE MIL AID. HINTED HE WOULD SEEK REELECTION NEXT OCT, AND PROMISED CRACKDOWNS ON OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS

THAT OPERATE BEHIND "SMOKE SCREENS " (AP,SUN)

WP AND NYT FRONT-PAGE UPI PHOTO OF BODIES OF SCHOOLCHILDREN
KILLED BY INSURGENT ROCKET; SCENE ALSO RECEIVED EXTENSIVE
TV COVERAGE. AP (SUN) REPORTS CHINESE-BUILT ROCKET
EXPLODED IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, KILLED NINE AND WOUNDED
35, SOME SERIOUSLY ACCORDING REPORTERS ON SCENE. NYT
(PP) DESCRIBES BLOODY SCENE AT SCHOOL AND FRENZY OUTSIDE
AS PARENTS CONVERGED ON GROUNDS; REPORTS EIGHT CHILDREN
AS PARENTS CONVERGED ON GROUNDS; REPORTS EIGHT CHILDREN

KILLED INSTANTLY AND SIX DIED LATER IN HOSPITAL. SAYS
NOT WORST ROCKET ATTACK ON CITY, BUT FIRST TIME MISSILE
LANDED IN CLASSFUL OF CHILDREN. QUOTES GKR STATEMENT
DENOUNCING "MASSACRE OF INNOCENTS" AND APPEALING TO
WORLD TO CONDEMN COMMUNISTS. ARTICLE NOTES SOME CONCERN
THAT HEAVIER BARRAGES WILL COME. POINTS OUT ROCKETS
ALMOST NEVER LAND ON MIL TARGETS, AND WESTERN OBSERVERS
BELIEVE PURPOSE IS ALMOST ENTIRELY PSYCHOLOGICAL.

WP'S GREENWAY IN PP DESCRIBES GORY ROCKET EXPLOSION IN
SCHOOL, AND LATER ROCKET THAT HIT NEAR MARKET. NOTES
THAT UNTIL NOW, COMPARATIVELY FEW ROCKET OR ARTILLERY
ATTACKS IN CENTER OF TOWN. QUOTES OFFICIALS THAT SINCE
JAN 1, OVER 550 ROCKETS HAVE STRUCK CITY AND AIRPORT
AND KILLED 75. NOTES FRENCH AMBASSADOR RECENTLY
ADVISED 1500-MEMBER FRENCH COMMUNITY "WISE PRECAUTION"
TO EVACUATE WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

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GKR TROOPS DRIVEN FROM KEY MEKONG OUTPOST 23 MILES SE
OF PP. POSITION WAS STRATEGIC IN DEFENDING CONVOYS,
ACCORDING MIL SOURCES (AP, SUN). GREENWAY SEES USE
OF MINES DRAMATICALLY TIPPING BATTLE OF MEKONG IN
INSURGENTS FAVOR, WITH RIVER EFFECTIVELY BLOCKADED
FOR MOMENT. SAYS OFFICIALS RELUCTANT TO GIVE FIGURES
ON SHIP LOSSES SINCE JAN 1; BUT BY PIECING TOGETHER
INFO, CONCLUDES 16 SHIPS, TUGS AND BARGES LOST. STATES
KHMER NAVY TRYING IMPROVE MINE-SWEEPING TECHNIQUES
BEFORE NEXT CONVOY MAKES ATTEMPT - PERHAPS WITHIN NEXT
FEW DAYS. TANKERS AND FREIGHTERS WERE GOING TO BE
REPLACED BY TUGS AND BARGES, LESS VULNERABLE TO FIRE
FROM SHORE; BUT NOW MINES MAKE TUGS VULNERABLE, TOO.
MINES BELIEVED PRIMITIVE TYPES DETONATED BY WIRE
FROM BANKS, BUT KHMER NAVY'S MINE-SWEEHING TECHNIQUES
"EQUALLY PRIMITIVE." SEES GKR ALSO TRYING TO WREST
MORE OF RIVER BANK FROM INSURGENT CONTROL.

NYT'S SCHANBERG (ALSO ABRIDGED IN SUN) IN PP NOTES
FIGURES OBTAINED LOCALLY AND ADMIN'S OWN EARLIER
ESTIMATES INDICATE THAT UNTIL RECENTLY OFFICIALS
BELIEVED FAR LESS MIL AID WOULD SUFFICE THAN WHAT PRES

NOW ASKS FOR. ANALYSTS BELIEVE THIS RAISES QUESTION OF WHETHER ADMIN TRYING ESTABLISH BUFFER STOCK FOR NEXT YR, WHEN WEARY CONGRESS CAN BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE LESS. DIPLOMATS AND MIL ANALYSTS WONDER WHY ADMIN ASKED 362.5 MILLION IN MIL AID FOR 6KR (CUT BY CONGRESS TO 275 MILLION), ONLY TO REQUEST SUPPLEMENTAL OF 222 MILLION THAT WOULD MAKE TOTAL HIGHEST FOR WAR. EMBASSY AND WASHINGTON EXPLANATIONS DO NOT SQUARE

WITH FACTS AND GIVE CONFUSED PICTURE. IN NOV, EMBASSY OFFICIALS SAID GKR EMBARKED ON CONSERVATION PROGRAM IN ANTICIPATION OF REDUCED AID TO MAKE AMOUNT LAST THROUGH FY. ON JAN 7, SENIOR EMBASSY OFFICIAL SAID AID CUT DID NOT PUT GKR IN AS BAD SHAPE AS GVN AND, "I DON'T THINK WE'RE IN TROUBLE." SCHANBERG QUOTES AMBASSADOR DEAN FEW DAYS AGO THAT WITHOUT SUPPLEMENTAL, FANK WOULD RUN OUT OF AMMO "LONG BEFORE THE END OF THE FISCAL YEAR." SAYS EMBASSY IN UNCLASSIFIED

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MAKING "NEW CASE" SUGGESTED UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENTS: INCREASED COSTS, INTENSITY OF INSURGENT OFFENSIVE, PLUS TAKING TRANSPORT COSTS FROM MIL AID BUDGET. SEES SHIPPING COST QUESTION RAISING NEW POINT OF CREDIBILITY, BECAUSE SINCE WAR'S START EMBASSY TOLD NEWSMEN SHIPPING COSTS INCLUDED IN MIL AID BUDGETS, BUT NOW ADMITS THAT CAME FROM SPECIAL PENTAGON BUDGET. SAYS SOME DIPLOMATS WONDER IF PRES IS ASKING FOR MORE MIL AID PURELY FOR BARGAINING PURPOSES BECAUSE HE EXPECTS CONGRESS TO CUT REQUEST DRASTICALLY.

IN CONTRAST TO MIL AID, SCHANBERG SEES CLEAR-CUT NEED FOR ECON AND HUMANITARIAN AID, SAYS EMBASSY OFFICIALS WILL SEEK TO RESTORE CONGRESSIONAL CUT (ADMIN ASKED FOR 288 MILLION, BUT CONGRESS VOTED 177 MILLION). QUOTES RELIEF OFFICIALS THAT SUBSTANTIALLY MORE AID THAN ORIGINALLY REQUESTED COULD BE USED BECAUSE MALNUTRITION BECOMING SERIOUS PROBLEM. DOS OFFICIALS DENY 222 MILLION SUPPLEMENTAL FOR GKR WAS DESIGNED AS BUFFER AGAINST FUTURE CONGRESSIONAL CUTS, SAY FUNDS URGENTLY NEEDED TO MEET CURRENT REQUIREMENTS. DOD SPOKESMAN REJECTS ALLEGATIONS SUPPLEMENTAL REQUEST INFLATED AND BOOKS JUGGLED ON TRANSPORT COSTS (NYT).

LAOTIAN COMMITTEE NAMED TO BEGIN INVESTIGATION INTO FATE OF NEARLY 300 AMERICANS MIA IN LAOS, ACCORDING PL SPOKESMAN. US SOURCES SAY DOD BELIEVES IT MOST UNLIKELY ANY OF MISSING AMERICANS STILL ALIVE (AP,WP).

2. BURMA

SUN STAFF CORRESPONDENT, IN RANGOON, REPORTS BURMA ABOUT TO RECEIVE SIX USG HELICOPTERS FOR USE AGAINST OPIUM SMUGGLERS. GUB HAS NOT YET AGREED TO ANY OTHER CO-OPERATIVE MEASURES, HOWEVER, AND SOME OBSERVERS DOUBTFUL CHOPPERS WILL ACTUALLY BE USED FOR INTENDED PURPOSE. CITES ONE BURMESE OFFICIAL ACKNOWLEDGING, "I THINK THEY WILL BE USED FOR STRICTLY MILITARY PURPOSES."

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NOTES TERMS OF LAST JUNE'S AGREEMENT, 5.34-MILLION-DOLLAR COST OF PROGRAM, AND THAT CHOPPERS WILL BE FLOWN AND SERVICED BY USAF. US OFFICIALS ADMIT TO "LEGITIMATE QUESTIONS" ABOUT PROGRAM, HAVING TO DO WITH DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US AND BURMESE PRIORITIES, BURMA'S ABILITY AND COMMITMENT TO ANTI-NARCOTICS DRIVE, AND EXTRAORDINARY SECRECY PRACTICED BY GUB IN GENERAL AND MILITARY IN PARTICULAR THAT MAY MAKE IT HARD FOR US MONITORS TO EVALUATE PROGRAM. FURTHERMORE, THERE IS DISPUTE WHETHER BURMESE CONCERN IN OPIUM-GROWING/SMUGGLING REGIONS CENTERS NOT ON NARCOTICS TRAFFIC, BUT ON WELTER OF TRIBAL/POLITICAL INSURGENCIES IN AREA.

WHILE CONCEDING THIS, US OFFICIALS POINT OUT THAT MOST REBELS SUPPORT THEMSELVES LARGELY BY SMUGGLING OPIUM. MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST THEM WOULD HAVE EFFECT OF SUPPRESSING OPIUM TRAFFIC, EVEN IF THAT WERE NOT PRINCIPAL GUB OBJECTIVE. HOWEVER, MAJOR THREAT IS COMMUNIST REBELLION IN NORTH, HEAVILY SUPPORTED BY PRC. CITES AMEMBASSY SOURCE THAT RECENT EVIDENCE COMMUNIST INSURGENTS HAVE BEGUN TRAFFICKING IN OPIUM, THOUGH SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGED "THEY ARE NOT THE LARGEST OR EVEN ONE OF THE TWO OR THREE LARGEST TRAFFICKERS."

BUT OTHER SOURCES DISAGREE. ONE KNOWLEDGEABLE BURMESE SAYS HE DOUBTS COMMUNISTS IN OPIUM TRADE TO ANY EXTENT; AND EXPERT IN NARCOTICS FIELD IN THAILAND ALSO UNAWARE OF ANY EVIDENCE COMMUNISTS HAVE BEGUN TRAFFICKING. THIS CONCLUSION CONSISTENT WITH BELIEF OF EXPERIENCED AMERICANS. WHATEVER TRUTH ABOUT BURMESE COMMUNISTS, SEEMS LIKELY THAT IF GUB USES CHOPPERS AGAINST THEM, EFFECT ON OPIUM TRADE WILL BE NO MORE THAN MARGINAL. EVEN US-BURMA AGREEMENT DOES NOT ENTIRELY RULE OUT CHOPPERS' USE FOR MILITARY OR OTHER USES.

3. KOREA

WP CITES SOUTHERN BAPTIST SPOKESMAN THAT MISSION OFFICIAL REV. WILLIAM SELF HAS ACCEPTED ROKG INVITATION TO LOOK INTO CHARGES OF RELIGIOUS

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SUPPRESSION IN SK, PLANS TRAVEL FEB 17 - 26. FIRST
SUCH OFFICIAL INVITATION TO US CLERIC.

4. INDONESIA

AP (JAKARTA) NOTES US SIGNED AGREEMENT FRIDAY TO LEND
GOI 24.7 MILLION DOLS FOR MALARIA-CONTROL PROGRAM.

UPI (SAMARINDA) REPORTS IMPACT OF WORLD RECESSION ON
EAST KALIMANTAN LOGGING INDUSTRY LIMITED, SO FAR, TO
SMALL FIRMS. NOTES 500 US, FIL EXPATRIATES HELP FRONTIER
PEOPLE DEVELOP FOREST RESOURCE AGAINST DAY OIL EXHAUSTED.
INDONESIA'S FAST-GROWING LOG EXPORTS ROSE TO 574 MILLION
DOLS LAST YEAR.

5. THAILAND

NYT (SPECIAL) SAYS NEW ASSEMBLY ELECTED SPEAKER,
DEP SPEAKER, NOMINATED BY RIGHT-WING, MILITARY-BACKED
THAI NATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PART
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